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1961

19 June 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Stephen E. Smith — Visit to CIA

Mr. Smith visited CIA on the morning of 15 June 1961, hearing a briefing on the intelligence community from Mr. [redacted] and meeting Messrs. Critchfield, FitzGerald, and J.O. King in their respective offices.

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[redacted] briefing included the function of intelligence in the U.S. Government, the positions of the NSC and the USIB, the role of the DCI, various levels of intelligence from current collection to evaluation, the respective roles of State, Defense, and CIA in each, and the NSC 5412 activities and the respective roles of State, Defense, ICA, and USIA in overt actions with CIA in the covert action role. The hour-and-a-half briefing ended with a quick review of the CIA organization chart. Mr. Smith was plainly interested and impressed, as the intelligence community was a new concept for him. His questions were on the differences between types of intelligence collection, between overt and covert actions, the respective roles of the Defense department and the CIA, on what motivates an agent to commit espionage, and on the role of OO.

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Mr. Smith asked each of the three division chiefs for his view on the Operations Center and how it could work best for the government as a whole and for inter-agency relations in particular.

Mr. Critchfield cited the previous example of the inter-departmental group on Berlin that had been called together three years ago under Robert Murphy, but that was hampered by lack of a permanent home and adequate facilities such as the Operations Center now provides. He outlined his division's relations with State Department which are handled routinely at the desk level. The respective deputies of Mr. Critchfield and Mr. Talbott meet regularly once a week and Messrs. Critchfield and Talbott themselves meet when the occasion warrants.

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As for the Iran Task Force, Mr. Critchfield pointed out the advantage of having the CIA Station Chief back to sit in. Mr. Critchfield stressed that the Task Force chairman should at the start set the terms of reference, and make sure that the latest national estimate is available. He suggested that the Task Force periodically be called together again to review the implementation of agreed policies and provide continuing inter-agency review over other contingencies as they may arise.

Mr. Fitzgerald expressed mixed emotions toward the Operations Center. Both the Laos and Vietnam task forces were more emergency "command posts." The Mexican task force was a somewhat disappointing exercise in that it merely outlined the problems the Ambassador would have to face and on which he alone could take action. It appeared that the Task Force was to change views held within State, a "heavy-handed" way to accomplish this. Mr. Fitzgerald stated however that the Vietnam exercise has been worthwhile.

Mr. King listed eight countries that would be "crisis areas" in his view: Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Salvador, Haiti, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. In the future there might be a ninth, namely Colombia. He cited the factors of broad popular support among the masses in many countries for strong dictators still in power. Thus the mass of the Dominicans genuinely grieved for Fujillo instead of rising up against him. Mr. Smith asked about intelligence coverage in the Caribbean areas. Mr. King said it was generally good, although in Haiti it needs shoring up.

Mr. Smith asked about the Cuban task force and Mr. King told him that Mr. Biswell himself had been on it.

At the end of the morning, Mr. Smith expressed his desire to return for more meetings with other key agency officials.

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